

Romans

Chapter 2

II. The Universal State of Man - Part 2

A. The Condemnation of the Morally Good or the Common Jew - Romans 2:1-16

Paul, having finished with the condemnation of the heathen man in the last part of chapter one, continues by condemning the morally good man or the common Jew. In developing this theme, Paul argues with an imaginary opponent by anticipating questions or arguments and answering them. This method is known as *diatribe*. In fact, he uses this method throughout the book of Romans. (see chapters 3 and 6 for further examples).

Commentators are pretty much divided on exactly who Paul is talking about in this section. Some believe he is talking to a moral man (such as a Gentile with high moral standards), and others think that he is referring to Jews. In either case, the principles of judgment laid down by Paul are applicable to both audiences and hence it really doesn't matter all that much who we believe the audience to be. In presenting this condemnation, Paul lists six attributes of divine judgment: knowledge, truth, guilt, deeds, impartiality, and motive.

1. Divine Judgment is According to Knowledge - Romans 2:1

2:1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

The first principle of divine judgment is that it is according to knowledge. Having just finished a scathing condemnation of the evil of the heathen man, Paul turns to those who would agree with him and condemns them as well. His first argument is "You know enough of the divine standard to judge others, therefore you are more responsible to live up to the standard than the heathen!" In other words, Paul is saying that the more knowledge a man has of the divine standard, the more he is responsible for living up to that standard.

There is an interesting word play in the original language in this verse. The word "judge" is *krinie*, "to judge", and the word "condemn" is *katakrinie*, an intensified form of "to judge." In other words, Paul is saying that the man who judges another, doubly-judges himself. We are reminded of the confrontation between David and Nathan in 2 Samuel 12:1ff.

Many men today think that because they have an idea of the divine standard, God will not judge them as severely as a heathen man. In fact, the Jew believed that they would be judged by a different standard than the Gentiles. Note the following passages from the apocrypha:

Wisdom of Solomon 11:10 For thou didst test them as a father does in warning, but thou didst examine the ungodly as a stern king does in condemnation.

Wisdom of Solomon 12:22 So while chastening us thou scourgest our enemies ten thousand times more, so that we may meditate upon thy goodness when we judge, and when we are judged we may expect mercy.

Wisdom of Solomon 15:1-3 But thou, our God, are kind and true, patient, and ruling all things in mercy. For even if we sin we are thine, knowing thy power; but we will not sin, because we know that we are accounted thine. For to know thee is complete righteousness.

Paul is stating the exact opposite. God's judgment is not based on a double standard, one for the Gentile and another for the Jew. Instead, it is based on one's knowledge of the divine standard and one's response to that standard. Peter and Christ both state this standard in the following passages:

Luke 12:42-48 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

2 Peter 2:21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

Another problem faced by men is that they can usually see the sin in others before seeing the sin in themselves. In Matthew 7:2-3 we read:

Judge not, that ye be not judged For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Christ is not trying to tell His listeners that it is wrong to judge others, as many use this passage to prove. Rather, He is telling His listeners that before they pull the speck of dust out of another's eye, they take the 2x4 out

of theirs. Many times we condemn others for a sin we ourselves are guilty of. This is hypocrisy.

2. God's Judgment is According to Truth - Romans 2:2-3

2:2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. 2:3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

The second principle of divine judgment is that it is according to truth. God is not going to be fooled by anyone. Most people think that God's judgment will be by some standard that they have attained. They somehow hope that God will not judge on the basis of internal attitudes, but on the basis of an external facade of morality. Jesus himself criticizes this view in Matthew 7:21-25 where he states:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Jesus' statement was simple. Many people think they are all right because their lives are characterized by morality, virtue, and even wondrous works. However, when God's divine standard of truth is applied, a standard that takes into consideration the attitudes of the heart and not just the outward manifestation of morality, all men will come woefully short. Jeremiah 17:9 states that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?". We give ourselves a higher opinion than God would, all because our heart is deceitful. We must understand that God's judgment is not whimsical, it is according to the divinely revealed standard.

3. God's Judgment is According to Guilt - Romans 2:4-5

2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 2:5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

The third principle of divine judgment is that it is according to guilt. We must realize that we have actually committed sin and are guilty before God. Many times we get the idea that we are not as bad as we are. We feel that we can measure up to God's standard. Unfortunately, the standard to which we can measure up is an external standard, God demands internal perfection.

This concept, that of guilt because of sin, is something foreign to many people today. They are so used to the idea of grace, they forget they have offended a perfect, holy God. They treat sin too flippantly and the holiness of God too mundane. Whenever men in the Bible had a confrontation with God, they were devastated. Daniel fell over as a dead man, Isaiah said "Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips", Job was speechless, and the Apostle John fell on

his face. We need to realize that we cannot traipse into the presence of God with sin in our lives and expect any kind of meaningful encounter with God. In fact, if it were not for the continual cleansing power of the blood of Christ, even we as believers would be blasted into hell.

In verse 4, Paul states that we despise the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering when we fail to take into consideration his patience in regard to our sin. These are interesting words. Goodness (*chrestotes*) refers to that side of goodness that is kind and gentle in nature. It is the kind of goodness that we see in Christ's act of forgiving the adulteress in John 8. Forbearance (*anochē*) refers to God's deliberate holding back of divine judgment on sin. In classical Greek it was used to refer to a temporary truce. Finally, longsuffering (*makrothumeia*) refers to the act of putting up with adverse people, a thought echoed in 2 Peter 3:8. God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering are all meant to lead men to repentance. When men despise that, they incur greater wrath.

Thus we see that Paul is saying that men who look down on God's kindness towards them by holding back His divine wrath for an extended period of time only bring upon themselves greater judgment when the day of grace is ended. By neglecting the patience of God, we store up wrath because of our sin. For those who have placed their faith in Christ, that wrath has been poured out at the cross. For those who despise the cross, that wrath will be poured out in an eternal hell.

Most commentators, and myself included, believe that the time of wrath spoken of here is that of the Great White Throne judgment found in Revelation 20:11-15. Those who despise God's mercy will someday find themselves the recipients of His wrath.

4. The Judgment of God is According to Deeds - Romans 2:6-10

2:6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds: 2:7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: 2:8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 2:9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; 2:10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

The fourth principle of divine judgment is that it is according to deeds. Men are judged on the basis of what they have done in life.

Romans 2:6

Revelation 20:11-15 states:

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to

their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The scene is somewhere in the heavens. God calls all of the ungodly dead into account for their evil. This judgment is not to determine eternal destiny, it is to determine the severity of judgment. (Some scholars may disagree with this point since they point out 1: when are the millennial saints judged?, and 2: why is the book of life opened if no one is in it?) Note that the passage states that "the books were opened." These books are the divine record of every thought, action, and deed of man. Nothing will be missed. It is on the basis of this divine record that the unrighteous dead will receive condemnation.

One logical question is "Why are the dead judged at this time? Why aren't they judged immediately after death?". The answer to this question is that all of a man's deeds do not immediately cease upon his death. His influence may live on for many years. For example, Hitler's sin did not immediately stop upon his death. The evil he did in life lived on for many years later. Since God is a God of total fairness and justice, he would have to take into account the evil influence that lives on after men die. By the same token, the godly influence of many great men of God live on after their death.

The word "render" is *apodidomi*, and refers to the act of paying someone for doing something. Men are "paid" by God for doing evil. This thought is echoed in Romans 6:23 in which we read that the wages of sin is death. Men only get what they deserve.

Romans 2:7

The two words "patient continuance" are translated from the word *hupomena*. *Hupomena* is a compound word and literally means "to abide under." It is often used in reference to endurance, specifically endurance under some type of duress. Paul is saying that the people who are seeking glory, honor, and immortality, are doing so against the current. We all know that it is not easy to do good, in fact, it is very difficult. However, the reward is eternal life.

We read what this eternal life is in John 17:3:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Romans 2:8

In this verse Paul gives the flip side. Those who are rebellious and ignore the truth will receive indignation and wrath. Indignation (*orgay*) is the word used in the first chapter to refer to the wrath of God. Wrath (*thumos*) is the explosive anger of God against evil. The idea is that those who refuse to seek eternal life instead receive

eternal judgment. Furthermore, this judgment is two-fold in nature, first in that it is God's settled anger against sin, and secondly in that it is often revealed in God's explosive anger when He is moved in judgment.

Romans 2:9

Tribulation (*thlipsis*) carries the idea of being squeezed. Anguish (*stenochoria*) means to be between two immovable objects, to be in straits, hence distress. The future of the ungodly is not a pleasant one. Since they are determined to be rebellious against God, they will be forced into submission by divine judgment. The Bible states that "every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is LORD". The question is not "Will you confess Jesus is Lord?". The question is "When will you confess Jesus is Lord, here or in eternity?".

Romans 2:10

Glory, honor, and peace are the lot of those who seek after God and His righteousness. Glory in that we will once again be able to reflect our creator in the manner in which we were designed to do. Honor in that we will receive recognition for our labors and be the recipients of the favor of God. Peace in that the war with God is over and His peace rules in our hearts.

We once again see the divine order of Jew first then Gentile. God chose the Jew to be His channel of blessing to men, but when the Jew refused to live up to that calling, God turned to the Gentile. Although God's favor is first to the Jew, both Jew and Gentile are ultimately equal partners in eternal life.

5. God's Judgment Will Be Impartial - Romans 2:11-14

2:11 For there is no respect of persons with God. 2:12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; 2:13 (For not the hearers of the law [are] just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 2:14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Romans 2:11

The fifth principle of divine judgment is that God's judgment will be impartial. This is important since the Jew of Paul's day had the idea that they had some special favor with God because of their nationality. (This is a concept Paul will demolish in Romans 9 as well as later on in this chapter) They felt that because they were a Jew, they would never fall under the severe judgment of God. In fact, many of the rabbis taught that it was not possible for a Jew to go to hell.

Because of this mindset, Paul addresses this issue with the concise statement, "There is no respect of persons with God." God is not partial. God will not be swayed by the nationality, wealth, looks, or prestige of any human. God's judgment is solely on the basis of truth.

An excellent passage in the New Testament that deals a severe blow to the practice of respecting persons is James 2. In that passage James condemns those who treat the rich (the men with the gold-fingered hands) better than the poor. God does not play favorites! This was a message echoed throughout the Scriptures. Note the following representative verses on this subject.

Deuteronomy 10:17 For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

Leviticus 19:15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

Deuteronomy 1:17 Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.

Ephesians 6:9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

Romans 2:12-13

Although God's judgment is according to truth and is not based on a person's heritage, wealth, or prestige, it does not mean that everyone will be judged the same. Contrary to popular belief, Gentile and Jew alike are condemned. Many believe that those who do not know God's requirements will somehow escape condemnation. Not so! This verse says very clearly that the Gentile will perish without the law. The word "perish" (*apolo*) means "to bring to ruin", "to destroy something's intended purpose." It does not mean, as some assert, to cause to cease to exist. Those who perish forever fail to live as God created them to live.

The idea of the Jew being condemned along with Gentiles is a devastating revelation to the Jewish person. They were so enamored of the law and convinced of their special place in God's sight that the thought of a Gentile getting in on the blessing of God was unthinkable. The world consisted of two groups of people, the Jew, who would populate God's kingdom, and the Gentiles, who would be condemned forever by God. Jonah's big problem was that God seemed to be ready to show mercy to the Assyrians, something that was definitely not in the interest of Jonah who wanted to see them destroyed. Christ Himself demolishes this mindset in the Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son (Matthew 22:1-14) and the in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Matthew 21:33-44). In both of these parables Christ attacked the belief that the Jews were by default God's people. God has always required repentance and belief in Him as a prerequisite for salvation regardless of race or creed.

The problem is revealed in verse 13, the Jew was only a hearer of the law, not a doer (see James 1:22). The Pharisees had hundreds of laws relating to every aspect of life, but they lived in gross evil because they did not consider the sins of the heart. Christ condemned them for tithing mint, anise, and cummin while neglecting the weightier matters of the law, like justice, faith and judgment (Matthew 23:23). What one knows is irrelevant to God, it is what one does that matters.

Romans 2:14

In further understanding this passage, we need to know that the law spoken of in this verse is the written revelation of God, not just the decalogue. In fact, most of the uses of "law" in the New Testament refer to the entire written revelation of God, not just Exodus 20. The Gentiles do not have the "law", however, they do have an inward law. Therefore, although the Gentiles do not have the written revelation of God, there is something in them that gives a sense of right and wrong. It is this sense that will condemn the Gentile, it is the knowledge of the law that will condemn the Jew. In either case, all will be condemned.

It is as though Paul is saying that the external law of the Jew, that is, the codification of God's law as revealed in Scripture, is in a sense "built in" to the heart of man. The Gentiles (nations) do not have God's written law on tables of stone, but they do have God's law written in their hearts. It is true that this internal law may become corrupted, but it is still there. The very fact that even those without the law live up to the law (however imperfect that may be) shows that they have an understanding of God's moral law.

6. God's Judgment is According to Motives - Romans 2:15-16

2:15 Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) 2:16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

The sixth and last principle of God's judgment is that it is according to motives. It is this element of judgment that will ultimately condemn men. As we look at others we see external aspects of behavior, we cannot see the heart. The Bible, however, teaches that God looks at the heart, not the externals.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?

Matthew 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Matthew 15:18-19 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

Mark 7:6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

Colossians 3:22 Servants, obey in all things [your] masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, did not redefine the law as some think. All He did was to restore the law to the proper place that God always intended it to be. God was always interested in the heart of man. Many think that the law was external observances and practices. That is untrue. God has always desired for man to love him from his heart, not out of external observances. Note the verse in Mark 7:6 quoted above. Externally, everything was great for the hypocrites. Unfortunately, God's standard was the attitudes of the heart and it is here that the hypocrites fell far short. It is interesting to note that Jesus never condemned the activities of the Pharisees that were based in the law. He did, however, always condemn their heart since it was there that the divine standard was violated. A hypocrite is not one who knows the standard and attempts to live up to it, he is one who knows the standard and pretends to live up to it.

This principle also applies in the life of a believer. We can do the right things with the wrong motives. These works, however externally good they may be, are wood, hay, and stubble. It is only when we serve God out of a heart of love that we have the gold, silver, and precious stones category of works.

B. The Condemnation of the Jew - Romans 2:17-29

In this section of Romans, Paul turns his attention to the religious Jew. The religious Jew would vigorously agree with Paul regarding the condemnation of the heathen and the moral man (or the non-religious Jew), but he would never agree with his own condemnation. The reason for this is that the Jew trusted in his nationality, possession of God's law, and circumcision. Paul must demolish this false security if the religious Jew is to see his need for Christ.

1. The False Security of Nationality - Romans 2:17; 28-29

2:17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, **2:28** For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: **2:29** But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Romans 2:17

The first element of false security that Paul must expose is the Jew's trust in their nationality. The Jews considered themselves so

privileged because of their national selection by God that they taught that no Jew would ever fall under the condemnation of God regardless of the way they lived. Christ confronted this issue in John 8 with the Pharisees. In that passage we see Christ arguing with the Pharisees who insisted they were Abraham's seed. Christ told them that if they were truly Abraham's seed, they would not seek to kill him.

John the Baptist had a similar encounter with the Pharisees. In Luke 3:7-8 we find the Pharisees coming out to the Jordan to see what John was doing. His greeting, a direct confrontation of their hypocrisy, was "O you generation of snakes, Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?". He then tells them not to say "We are Abraham's seed" since God can turn stones into children of Abraham. The point is that the Pharisees never saw themselves under the judgment of God because of their nationality. In fact, when Titus Vespasian overran Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Jews ran to the temple and stacked themselves on one another since they thought that God would never allow a Gentile into the holy grounds.

Romans 2:28-29

Because of this mindset, Paul addresses the issue of nationality by pointing out that true Jewishness is not a matter of birth, but a matter of the heart. In verses 28 and 29 Paul says that a true Jew is one who is a Jew inwardly, not outwardly. A further argument against this mindset is found in Romans 9 where Paul proves that descent from Abraham does not insure the blessing of God. He uses two examples in verses 6-13, Ishmael and Esau. He shows that although both were physical descendants of Abraham, neither one shared in the promises and blessings of God. Paul's warning is clear, Jewish nationality does not insure salvation or blessing.

2. The False Security of the Law - Romans 2:18-24

2:18 And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; 2:19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, 2:20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. 2:21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? 2:22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? 2:23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? 2:24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

The second element of false security that Paul attacks is the false security of the law. The Jews took special pride in their possession of the law. Unfortunately, God never intended Israel to hoard the law as they did, they were to be the light of the world. Paul confronts this element of false security by pointing out that 1), knowledge of the law does not lessen the responsibility to keep it, and that 2), the Jews had failed in presenting the true God to the nations.

Romans 2:18-20

First, Paul shows in verses 18 to 23 that although the Jews considered themselves experts in the law, they fell woefully short in the application of the law to their lives. Specifically, Paul points out the following boasts of the Jew:

1. They knew God's will. Because of their possession of the law, the Jews knew exactly what God expected.
2. They approve the more excellent things. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong.
3. They were instructed out of the law. The word for instructed is *katachoumenos* from which we get "catechism." They knew the law by heart. In fact, many of the chief rabbis could quote most of the Old Testament by rote.
4. They were confident that they were a guide to the blind. The word "confident" is in the perfect tense indicating a firm, settled conviction. The concept of them being blind was beyond their comprehension (see John 8:32 and following). Jesus himself called the Pharisees "blind guides of the blind". They thought they could see when in reality their mind was blinded to God's truth. (See Matthew 23:17, 19, 24, 26)
5. They considered themselves teachers of babes. In other words, they considered themselves the source of knowledge regarding God, the authority concerning his wisdom.
6. They considered themselves a light to those in darkness.
7. They considered themselves instructors to the foolish.

The Jewish legalists thought they had everything together. Unfortunately, their standard of righteous was purely external. In fact, they had so externalized the law that they could steal, extort money from others, lie, commit adultery, and kill and never consider themselves breakers of God's law. Jesus confronts this hypocrisy head on in the Sermon on the Mount where he raises the law of God back to the original place God intended it to have. Five times in Matthew 5 Jesus states "Ye have heard that it hath been said, but I say." In saying this, Jesus is drawing attention to what the rabbis taught, and what the original intent of the law was. For example, Jesus showed that the original intent of God was that there would be no room for divorce except for fornication. However, the rabbis had so lowered God's standard that a man could divorce his wife for most any reason at all provided he did the necessary paperwork. God demanded perfection, the rabbis demanded far less.

Romans 2:21-23

In verses 21 through 23 of Romans 2, Paul exposes their hypocrisy by using three examples, stealing, adultery, and idolatry.

1. The Jews considered themselves to be honest, however, they were far from that. The Jews who ran the temple concessions extorted money from pilgrims on a daily basis. In Matthew 23, Jesus states that they "devour widows houses", that is, they took the homes of widows for their own gain. They stole from their parents by withholding financial help when their parents were aged. The most abhorrent thing about it was that they had so redefined the law, that they could do this and never consider themselves breakers of the law.
2. The Jews considered themselves moral people. Paul points out that this is not the case since divorcing one's wife for any reason other than fornication just propagated more adultery. It is reasonable to assume that Paul had the Sermon on the Mount in mind here.
3. The Jews never considered themselves idolaters yet they killed their own Messiah! Idolatry is not bowing down to an idol, it is having anything between us and God. One could consider the law as one of the idols of the Jew. They were so intent on the law, that they failed to see the lawgiver when he came. The Sadducees were so intent on political power and intrigue that they killed their own Messiah to avoid a confrontation with Rome.

Verse 23 is the capstone. Paul accuses the Jew of making their boast of the law while at the same time breaking it. It is like the little kid bragging about his staying out of the jam jar without realizing that there is a gob of it on his chin and shirt which can be clearly seen by others.

Finally, Paul states that not only have the Jews greater condemnation because of their knowledge of the law, but they have failed in their mission to be a testimony to the world regarding the true God. In verse 24 Paul states that the name of God is blasphemed among the nations on account of the Jew. The name of God is everything God is, specifically, his attributes. No Gentile could look at the average Pharisee and have any concept of the true God. In Ezekiel we find God's condemnation of the Jew:

Ezekiel 36:17-23 Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they

entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land. But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

Israel had profaned God's name by living such a life of sin that when God's judgment fell, the nations perceived God as powerless and capricious. By the same token, when we live a life of sin and are chastised by God for it, we give the world a warped view of God.

3. The False Security of Circumcision - Romans 2:25-29

2:25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. 2:26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? 2:27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

The last element of false security attacked by Paul is circumcision. Paul states that circumcision means nothing unless it is backed up by a proper heart attitude. The Jews had raised the rite of circumcision to such a high level that they taught that no circumcised person would ever be sent to hell. In fact, one of the rabbis taught that Abraham sat at the gates of hell and would not allow any circumcised Jew, no matter how sinful, to enter. Paul attacks this teaching by showing that 1), circumcision is meaningless unless backed up by obedience to the law of God, 2), it is better to keep the law and be uncircumcised than to be circumcised and break the law, and 3) circumcision is a matter of the heart, not the flesh.

Romans 2:25-26

First, Paul states in verses 25 and 26 that circumcision is meaningless unless backed up by obedience. In fact, Paul states that circumcision plus disobedience equals uncircumcision. On the other hand, Paul states that uncircumcision plus obedience to the law of God equals circumcision. Simply stated, obedience is the key to a right relationship with God, not external rites.

Romans 2:27-29

Secondly, Paul asserts that it is better to be uncircumcised and obedient than it is to be circumcised and disobedient. In verse 27 Paul points out that uncircumcised men who keep the law will serve as a witness and judge against those who are circumcised and break the law.

Paul finishes by stating that true circumcision is not an external matter only, but is also internal. The Jew had so externalized God's requirements that external piety was all that was required, internal holiness was not. Note the following passages where God and others condemn the uncircumcised hearts of the Jews:

Jeremiah 9:26 Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.

Ezekiel 44:7 In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations.

Ezekiel 44:9 Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.

Acts 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

Why does Paul make these points? It is because the religious Jew had so externalized the requirements of the law that they failed to consider the true source of all sin, the heart. Since no Pharisee could live up to the true requirements of God, they had to lower those requirements so they could keep them. In doing so, they had invalidated the law and brought greater condemnation on themselves because they had sinned having greater light.